

RGS-IBG Annual International Conference 2011

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	Leisure spaces, popular culture and geographical imaginations (3)
Research Group(s)	Geography of Leisure and Tourism Research Group
Convenor(s)	Jacqueline Tivers (Nottingham Trent University) Jo-Anne Lester (University of Brighton)
Chair(s)	Jacqueline Tivers (Nottingham Trent University)
Timetable	Thursday 01 September 2011, Session 4
Room	Skempton Building, Room 307
Session abstract	This session will consider spaces of leisure, both as an aspect of popular culture and in relation to geographical imaginations. Leisure spaces, such as parks and gardens, theme parks, retail malls, heritage sites, airports, etc., are spaces that construct/produce/reproduce/represent other places and/or times and have the propensity to transport people into other worlds. These leisure spaces also draw on and embrace aspects of popular culture in their production and consumption (e.g. music, sport, food, etc). The papers presented consider leisure spaces in themselves, the role of these in feeding geographical imaginations and constructing other places, and the consumption of these spaces within popular culture.

Contact the conference organisers to request a change to session or paper details: AC2011@rgs.org

Literary landscapes, imagined worlds and the enchanted forest

Jo-Anne Lester (University of Brighton)

Catherine Palmer (University of Brighton)

Alan Alexander Milne created the first tale of Christopher Robin and his teddy bear, Winnie the Pooh in 1925. Today, these tales of a little boy and his bear are as popular as they have ever been. Moreover the characters of 'pooh bear' and his 'friends' are recognised and embraced throughout the world. Drawing on the relationship between literary landscapes, leisure spaces and their embodied practises, this presentation explores the connections between the fictional tales of Winnie the Pooh and Ashdown Forest. This area of natural beauty, located in the South East of England, is experienced as both a real and imagined geography. 'Pooh Country' is visited by those who wish to explore the '100 Aker Wood' and it's 'Enchanted Places'. There is the opportunity to play 'Poohsticks' at 'Poohsticks Bridge' or to make the trek to Gills Lap, the highest point of Ashdown Forrest overlooking all the 'Pooh' places. Drawing on on-site observations and interviews, this presentation focuses on the ways in which this physical and cultural landscape, and its sacred spaces, are mapped, defined and ascribed meanings drawn from these literary works. The ways in which these leisure spaces are temporally embodied and experienced by those who visit them is explored with a particular interest in the performed nature of such spaces.

The spaces of popular live musical performance

Michael Anton (Royal Holloway, University of London)

Music venues affect and are affected by the live performances that occur within them; gigs, music, lighting, staging, sounds, audiences and artists temporarily transform the spaces they unfold within, and the material structure, spatial constraints, acoustic properties, architectural design and cultural history of a venue makes an impact on the events that happen within its walls. Using aural, visual and experiential examples gathered during my ethnographic PhD research this paper presents a multifaceted and multimedia exploration of the buildings that constitute the Roundhouse (Camden, London) and the Troubadour (Earls Court, London) and considers how these leisure spaces use and are used by the processes that make up live music performance. It examines the ways in which live music draws audiences to these spaces and discusses how live music can affect crowds in ways that transcend the tangible materiality of a venue. The paper also looks beyond the gig itself to consider the practicalities of staging and producing events in order to give a fuller picture of how the geographies and spatialities of music venues, both material and intangible, are constructed by an ever-changing array of persons, concepts, energies and actions.

Ephemeral Festivals, Social Capital, and the Leisure Imagination

Jon Donlon (Tokai University, Japan)

This researcher identified remarkable similarities in spite of varied cultural origins and nominal geographic locations while doing field work at such events as camel wrestling in Turkey, “portable shrine” festivals in Japan, and Mardi Gras in the USA. At the same time, these festive occasions, although presumably acting toward a similar solution set, also possessed great differences or varied in the creation of their “playful” imaginative reality. In this paper, focus is directed toward essentially one example: Carnival in New Orleans, with special attention to rapid change introduced by disaster (the impact to Katrina in 2005) and consequent modernist outcomes. Carnavalesque or festive episodes are at their most quotidian, elementally functions of the imagination, existing not only as temporal inventions, but as ephemeral and friable construction of the participants. Although these leisure settings are playful they are not “work empty,” since it’s a laborious procedure to costume and provide hospitality; and its tedious and “hard” to work at keeping the real world at bay even temporarily.

Transporting people to new experiences: The role of airport spaces

Erwin Losekoot (Auckland University of Technology, New Zealand)

Nevan Wright (Auckland University of Technology, New Zealand)

This paper considers the changing role of national airports. Traditionally national airports are seen as a symbol of national pride and act as a base for a country’s flag-carrier airline, but in recent years there has been a shift to a more customer-focused, market-driven facility resembling an amalgamation of retail mall and theme park whose goal is to promote a destination to the world while making a profit for its owners. This research will be based on Auckland airport, New Zealand, but will also be drawing on other global examples. It will reflect on the physical environment using Bitner’s (1992) ‘servicescape’ model which evaluates the different cues both customers and employees receive from the environment they find themselves in. The paper will also review the academic knowledge surrounding the processes which help to create, map and manage the customer experience for the travelling public (Fließ & Kleinaltenkamp, 2004; Langeard, Bateson, Lovelock & Eigler, 1981), and the way in which a national culture is represented in order to create an ‘experience’ for the traveller (Morgan, Lugosi & Ritchie, 2010; Walls, Okumus, Wang & Kwun, 2011). In conclusion, this paper will suggest ways in which airports can use their physical environment to satisfy the many needs of those sharing and co-creating experiences in this space as temporary members of a transient tribe (de Botton, 2010). This is important as airports and airlines are now operating in a very financially-transparent environment where the consumer has the opportunity to compare and contrast different offerings and to choose the one which delivers the best value experience according to their personal decision criteria (Gummesson, 2008; Vargo & Lusch 2004). A unique, authentic and positive experience will lead to the development of a loyal (and therefore more profitable) client base for the airline and the airport in question.